United Nations A/54/133 – E/1999/79

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
14 June 1999

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session
Item 46 of the preliminary list*
Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 1999
Geneva, 5–30 July 1999
Item 4 of the provisional agenda**
Coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system related to the following theme: Development of Africa: implementation and coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on African development

Development of Africa: implementation of the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council and the General Assembly, specifically the implementation and coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

* A/54/50.
** E/1999/100 and Add.1.

99-17817 (E) 290699

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–3	3
II.	Overview	4–9	3
III.	Measures related to the implementation of the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General	10–56	4
	A. Strengthening good governance	11–18	4
	B. Social development	19–26	5
	C. Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women	27–32	7
	D. Improving trade flows	33–39	7
	E. Improving financial resource flows	40–50	8
	F. Support for regional cooperation and integration	51–56	10
IV.	Priority areas under the current initiatives on Africa and possible priorities in partnership	57–75	11
V.	Coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on Africa	76–108	13
	A. Coordination of United Nations system initiatives	77–103	14
	B. Harmonization of non-United Nations initiatives on Africa	104–108	18

I. Introduction

1. Following its consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318), the Economic and Social Council, at its substantive session of 1998, decided to undertake substantive discussions on the implementation of the relevant recommendations at its substantive session of 1999 (decision 1998/283). The Council further decided that the coordination segment of its 1999 substantive session would be devoted to the consideration of the theme: "Development of Africa: implementation and coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on African development" (decision 1998/298).

2. The General Assembly invited African countries and their partners during the coordination segment of the 1999 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council to identify and rank priorities in partnership, to define respective responsibilities and to agree on realistic and measurable targets in priority areas (resolution 53/92).

3. In accordance with those decisions the present report is divided into three substantive sections dealing with measures taken relating to the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report (section III); priority areas (section IV); and coordination by the United Nations system of initiatives on Africa (section V). The report draws on information provided by the organizations of the United Nations system and donor countries, both developed and developing.[1]

II. Overview

4. In order to enhance the prospects for durable peace, the Secretary-General, in his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, calls for and highlights the importance of a substantial and sustained pace of economic growth and social development in Africa. For a brief period in the mid-1990s, African countries were able to reverse the years of stagnation and negative growth, and achieved growth rates of more than 5 per cent per year. Since then, growth has declined and was only 2.7 per cent in 1997 and 2.5 per cent in 1998. This marked two years of virtual stagnation in the region's per capita output, since population grows at 2.6 per cent per year. There was significant variation at the subregional level in 1998, with North and Central Africa experiencing improvements over 1997 while growth rates in gross domestic product (GDP) declined in eastern, western and southern subregions vis-à-vis 1997. Growth is expected to accelerate to about 3 per cent in 1999 and to 3.5 per cent in 2000 as a result of higher oil prices and higher demand for the exports of Africa. Moreover, growth in Nigeria and South Africa, the two largest economies in Africa, is expected to improve in 1999.

5. The slower growth in 1998 can largely be attributed to the sharp drop in export earnings, amounting to $18 billion. This was a result of lower oil and commodity prices and lower demand for African exports, which were both associated with the financial crises of 1997/98. A combination of good weather, which led to significant improvements in agricultural output, and an improved policy environment as evidenced, *inter alia*, by low fiscal deficits and inflation has been responsible for increased economic growth in a number of countries.

6. Growth in gross domestic product has not been strong or sustained enough to increase per capita income or make an impact on the levels of poverty in the sub-Saharan region. It has been estimated that 44 per cent of Africans as a whole and 51 per cent of those in Africa south of the Sahara live in absolute poverty. A recent report by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) also suggests that the goal set by the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 of halving poverty by 2015 would require a 4 per cent reduction in the number of people living in poverty each year, either through increased economic growth or through income redistribution. This would require a 7 per cent growth in GDP per year for Africa as a whole until 2015.

7. In this context, financing Africa's development is crucial. Improving primary, secondary and tertiary education, providing adequate health care, improving infrastructure, reducing poverty, reintegrating refugees and displaced persons from conflicts and catalysing structural transformation requires massive investment. The prospects for domestic resource mobilization continue to be limited by low savings ratios due to mass poverty and the subsistence income levels of the majority of Africans. While some room exists for reallocation of resources out of unproductive expenditure to build capacity, Africa's external debt continues to be a drag on its potential as the resources utilized to service its debt could otherwise be diverted to these important tasks. Africa's debt stock increased from $344 billion in 1997 to $350 billion in 1998 and is equivalent to over 300 per cent of exports of goods and services.

8. Beyond domestic resources, other sources of external finance, including foreign direct investment and official development assistance (ODA), have to increase to the levels

required to transform African economies and reduce poverty. Africa received $4.76 billion of foreign direct investment in 1997, representing 3 per cent of global flows. These inflows are highly concentrated in a few countries and are largely in gas, petroleum and other mining activities. Official development assistance remains critical to building capacity in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, especially when strengthening human, institutional and infrastructural capacities. However, ODA to Africa from countries members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) continues to decline, falling from its peak of $23 billion in 1992 to $18.7 billion in 1997.

9. It is in this overall context that the subsequent sections of this report need to be examined, the measures taken evaluated, priorities defined and recommendations on coordination of initiatives by the United Nations system made more specific.

III. Measures related to the implementation of the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General

10. Since the submission of the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council and the General Assembly in April 1998, a wide range of actions or programmes have been undertaken relating to the recommendations contained in the report.

A. Strengthening good governance

11. A number of activities have been undertaken by the United Nations system in the area of governance to support African countries in this area. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organized, jointly with ECA, with a contribution from the Regional Office of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the second Africa Governance Forum at Accra (June 1998), on accountability and transparency. The Forum served as a platform to promote the concept of an instrument of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on the conduct of public affairs, which UNDP will also help to design.

12. One of the issues that has been emphasized is accountability and transparency in public administration. In collaboration with the Global Coalition for Africa, the World Bank has sent multidisciplinary missions to help each country identify the causes and effects of corruption and to propose means to address the causes. The World Bank's recommendations include measures to strengthen the capacity of parliaments to exercise their oversight roles; legal, judicial, financial and public sector reforms; and strengthening the media and such watchdog agencies as the offices of accountants-general. Six countries (Benin, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania) have requested assistance from the World Bank to establish national anti-corruption programmes and, in many cases, the Economic Development Institute's integrity programmes are supporting those efforts.

13. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat focused on two specific areas of activity, governance and ethics. In the former, it provided assistance to several African countries, including Burundi, Liberia, Mozambique and South Africa, in the development of national capacity for the promotion of good governance. The assistance covered three main issues, namely, human rights, justice and the participation of civil society. In the latter, a major Pan-African Conference of Ministers of the Civil Service was organized in Morocco in December 1998, attended by ministers of the civil service from several African countries. Key deliberations at that Conference concerned the promotion of professionalism and ethical standards in the civil service in African countries. The Conference culminated in the adoption of the Rabat Declaration.

14. Enhancing administrative capacity is also a critical part of promoting good governance. The World Bank is assisting in building capacity for decentralization and local governance in sub-Saharan Africa. The Bank is of the view that the pervasive weakness of local governments and the lack of capacity of municipal institutions in the region are major impediments to social and economic development. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has approved projects, *inter alia*, in Ghana, Guinea and Senegal, which build on this approach. It stressed that support for rural decentralization has become an important tool for strengthening the capacities of the local populations and promoting participation in the decision-making process. IFAD is considering the possibility of expanding its support for decentralization to other countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

15. The report calls on African countries that have not done so to ratify United Nations and African instruments on human rights. By and large, the majority of African countries have signed and ratified the major international human rights instruments. As at 21 May 1999, 42 of 53 African countries have ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and 40 have ratified the International

Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Forty-two countries have ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, while 48 have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Twenty-seven countries have signed the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and 30 have ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Fifty-two countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, making it the most widely ratified treaty.

16. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNDP have been active in establishing regional and country-level support for Governments in the elaboration of human rights action plans. As a member of the United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Gender and Development, the Office is planning to launch a legal and human rights literacy programme geared towards women during the second half of 1999.

17. Various United Nations organizations provided assistance in the drafting of national legislation as well as technical advisory services in their respective areas of competence. The Office of the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provided assistance in the drafting of national refugee legislation in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, the Gambia, the Niger, Uganda and South Africa. Efforts are being made to have similar legislation adopted in other African countries, such as Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya and Rwanda, with a view to covering the whole continent. The International Labour Organization (ILO) gave technical advice on human rights questions and labour law revision, as well as on subregional training programmes for labour law judges on equity issues based upon an ILO manual for labour judges on the same subject. Its advocacy activities, among others, facilitated the support of African member States for the adoption in 1998 of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provides high-level experts to assist in the drafting of media legislation. It is also carrying out two major projects, one on strengthening democracy and governance through development of the media in Mozambique, and another on communication and good governance in 10 West and Central African countries (Benin, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Sao Tome and Principe and Togo).

18. Bilateral donors continue to support several governance-related projects in Africa. The Government of Australia is providing support in a number of areas, including capacity-building or the reform of public institutions in Mozambique and South Africa. A special visit programme to Australia was also arranged for a group of High Court judges from Zimbabwe. The Government of Australia has also given a number of small grants for the development of civil organizations. France supports governance programmes, particularly in the area of human rights, and has allocated FF5 million for projects to support activities, including holding elections in a number of countries. The Government of Norway has established a Trust Fund for Good Governance in Africa and the Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights, which provides experts in the field of democracy and human rights, is also available for use by the United Nations and others to support activities in Africa.

B. Social development

19. The United Nations and its agencies are involved in a number of activities geared towards creating an enabling environment for enhancing the effectiveness of the informal sector in both rural and urban areas. As lead organization for the priority area of the System-wide Special Initiative concerning poverty reduction through the promotion of the informal sector and employment-generating opportunities, ILO is promoting a series of interventions that include drafting appropriate macroeconomic policies; reforming government regulations, policies and institutions; providing appropriate incentives; developing market networks linking the formal and informal sectors; and providing physical and administrative infrastructures. Serious attempts are being made to maintain a gender focus in this component. ILO is also involved in strengthening the national capacities of constituents in the formulation of vocational training policies for both the formal and the informal sectors.

20. At a regional level, the ILO Biennial African Employment Planners Meeting has become a regular forum for reviewing the overall employment situation in Africa and recommending policies and strategies for employment promotion and poverty reduction. One major programme being implemented since July 1998 is the Jobs for Africa programme. Set up as a part of the Special Initiative and as follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, this regional programme provides an alternative policy framework for employment-intensive growth and formulates diversified and comprehensive programmes of action for job creation. The immediate objective of the programme is to develop and strengthen the capacity of national and regional institutions and networks in 10 participating countries (phase

one) to design and advocate alternative policies for poverty reduction through generating productive employment.

21. The report urges increased investment in human resources in recognition of its role as a driving force for development. The activities of the United Nations system under the Special Initiative in the field of education focused on improving primary education in 16 low primary enrolment countries, namely, Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, the Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia and Sierra Leone, and on advancing basic education for all African children. United Nations organizations have also been involved in improving the quality of education in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

22. There has been a steady progress in the area of primary education enrolment and advancing basic education for all African children. However, despite the progress, the low enrolment in primary education and the low literacy rate in the 16 selected countries is a matter of great concern. The proportion of the school-age population out of school remains high in many countries. It is observed that the efficiency is much greater when international institutions work together with the countries concerned.

23. Notwithstanding the improvement in the average life expectancy, infant mortality reduction and progress in the control of diseases, the overall health situation in Africa still gives cause for concern. Particularly, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS has already undone or threatens to undo many of the gains in child survival and quality of life achieved. HIV/AIDS has created a major development crisis, with 6 million new infections globally per year, or 16,000 a day, and 35 million persons living with HIV and AIDS. In 1998 there were 2.5 million AIDS-related deaths, even more than from malaria. In fact, evidence increasingly shows that in the more seriously affected countries AIDS is resulting in decreased life expectancy and increased child mortality. Furthermore, there is lost productivity, and the effects on the economy and development are starting to be more and more visible. Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 9 of 10 new infections in 1998. The epidemic is not only a major health concern, it affects all sectors of the economy and society and thus is of relevance to all United Nations organizations. The United Nations system is uniquely placed to make a difference through its political and its development work. The Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has intensified its action in Africa, in partnership with African Governments, regional bodies, bilateral development agencies, multilateral organizations, the corporate sector (with commitments from large pharmaceutical corporations, the entertainment industry and a Global Business Council on AIDS) and non-governmental organizations. The partnership will seek to develop, in participating countries, joint multisectoral action plans prepared with major national and international stakeholders and mobilize resources to fund them. Work is starting through country-based groups on HIV/AIDS.

24. Malaria prevention and control is another significant area where the efforts of the United Nations system are directed. The roll back malaria campaign led by the World Health Organization (WHO) aims to cut the number of deaths from malaria by 50 per cent by 2010 and 75 per cent by 2015. United Nations organizations continue to work together on the reduction of maternal mortality, which is closely related to HIV/AIDS and malaria in Africa, as well as to female genital mutilation.

25. As a follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, particularly relating to the commitment on Africa and the least developed countries, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is giving special attention to social policy issues of particular concern and the needs of specific population groups, including persons with disabilities, youth and the ageing. In various African countries it supports over 100 projects in the areas of social policy, poverty eradication and management of social change, and also provides advisory services in these areas. In March, 1999 ECA organized subregional follow-up conferences on the World Summit for Social Development, which provided opportunities for African countries to share experiences, including best practices, on the implementation of the Copenhagen Programme of Action. More importantly, the conferences adopted a number of recommendations to impart new momentum to the implementation of the commitments made at the Summit, emphasizing, for example, that poverty eradication and alleviation policies and strategies should be holistic, well targeted and participatory. Governments should review macroeconomic reform measures to ensure that they reflect social objectives, and should assess their impact on employment.

26. Some bilateral donors have taken steps to collaborate in the health sector with the organizations of the United Nations system. The Government of Japan plans to establish centres for parasitic disease control in Asia and Africa in close collaboration with WHO. The centres will provide training courses and operational research for parasitic disease control and contribute to regional cooperation, especially South-South cooperation among African and Asian countries. Japan and the United States of America plan to contribute towards ending the scourge of polio in Africa by expanding cooperative eradication efforts at the grass-

roots level by the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers and the United States Peace Corps Volunteers.

C. Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women

27. In 1998, ECA prepared "Status of women in Africa, 1998: 53 country profiles", a compilation of sex-disaggregated data on the status of women in the 53 ECA member States published in brochure format. The data contain selected indicators in some areas of concern contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, such as women in decision-making, education, health, the economic contribution of women and the rights of women and the girl child. The brochures are intended to serve as information, sensitization and advocacy tools by providing a clear picture of the extent to which Governments and other sectors of African society have succeeded in implementing international instruments aimed at achieving gender equality.

28. The Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is organizing a subregional workshop at Cotonou, Benin, in the latter part of 1999, on reporting under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which will be followed by in-country training components. The Division is also involved in efforts to encourage African States to ratify or accede to the Convention and to encourage those States which are parties to the Convention to submit the reports required under article 18 of the Convention.

29. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) contributes to the elimination of discrimination against women especially through awareness-building programmes and training programmes, especially in agro-industries. One of the most successful examples is an integrated training programme for the development of women's entrepreneurship in food-processing in the United Republic of Tanzania. Another example is a project aimed at assisting women manufacturers of textiles and garments to make the transition from the informal to the formal business sector in Kenya.

30. The Action for the Rights of Children training programme is a UNHCR initiative which is expected to be implemented in 1999. It includes a specific age-gender perspective and aims at increasing the capacity of UNHCR, government and non-governmental organization field staff to protect and care for children and adolescents in refugee situations. The initiative also aims at ensuring that girls and boys benefit equally from all protection and assistance efforts.

31. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has conducted a series of studies on enhancing the participation of women entrepreneurs in economies of least developed countries, in order to assess the impact of policies on promoting entrepreneurship among women and to identify those measures adopted at international conferences which have not been implemented but which need to be in place for women to become and remain entrepreneurs in the formal sector. The African least developed countries selected for the project are Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Madagascar, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

32. Through its Strategy for Women and Gender Equality in Development Cooperation programme, the Government of Norway seeks to strengthen the position of women, particularly with regard to the areas of poverty eradication and education. Working through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Norway has contributed $15 million to basic education for girls in 19 African countries.

D. Improving trade flows

33. The organizations of the United Nations system and the donor community have taken some steps to assist African countries in enhancing their diversification efforts. UNCTAD and the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) have launched the joint integrated technical assistance programme, for which a trust fund has been established. Of an estimated requirement of $10.3 million, $7.1 million have already been pledged. The implementation of the programme started in May 1998 on the basis of specific country projects in eight African countries, organized into 15 clusters of closely related activities so as to achieve synergies and economies of scale. It also helps African countries to identify and take advantage of opportunities provided by the multilateral trading system as well as access through WTO to implement the provisions thereof.

34. In cooperation with five other agencies, UNCTAD is actively involved in the Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance, including for Human and Institutional Capacity-building, to Support Least Developed Countries in Their Trade and Trade-related Activities, which was endorsed in October 1997. Twenty-two least developed countries, 16 of them in Africa, are currently in various stages of preparation for trade-related round-table meetings. Together with the International Chamber of Commerce,

UNCTAD has undertaken a project on investment guides and capacity-building for least developed countries.

35. At a meeting of the Secretary-General with representatives of Development Assistance Committee countries, held in September 1998 to urge the implementation of his recommendations on debt, ODA, market access and foreign direct investment, participants reaffirmed that, although efforts have been made to increase the market access for African exports in the framework of WTO and in the Lomé Convention, there is a need for greater access to the markets of industrialized countries. The Panel of High-level Personalities on African Development convened by the Secretary-General on 15 October 1998 also stressed the need to address high tariffs and tariff escalation that continue to exist in certain sectors of interest to African countries, such as agricultural products, textiles and clothing, and leather products. The issue of market access and the need for special and differential treatment for African countries will be addressed at an upcoming ad hoc expert group meeting on raising Africa's competitiveness in the changing global economy of the twenty-first century, organized by ECA.

36. In response to the Secretary-General's recommendation that improved South-South cooperation be used to reinforce export-led growth in Africa, the Republic of Korea organized, jointly with the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Forum on Asia-Africa Cooperation in Export Promotion at Seoul in December 1998. The Forum, which was attended by 22 African countries and 9 Asian countries and United Nations organizations involved in trade and investment activities, provided the opportunity to review both the Asian experience and the challenges facing Africa in export promotion and diversification, and adopted the Seoul Framework for Cooperation. The Government of India announced in 1998 the establishment of a $30 million revolving fund for Africa for promoting trade, investment and technology sharing, and for revitalizing bilateral trade with and investment in Africa.

37. Traditional donor countries are responding positively to the trade and investment opportunities available in African countries. The Government of Norway has established the Norwegian Risk Fund for Developing Countries to promote participation in the establishment of sustainable and profitable businesses in developing countries. In 1998, the first year of operation, 47 per cent of the Nkr 400 million allocated to the Fund was used to support investment in African countries.

38. The United States African Growth and Opportunity Act seeks to expand duty-free access to the United States market for goods now excluded under the generalized system of preferences and eliminates quotas on imports of textiles and apparel for countries which are pursuing economic and political reforms. The Act also calls for the creation of a United States-Africa economic forum to discuss economic matters of mutual concern and a United States-sub-Saharan Africa free trade agreement by 2020.

39. The rapidly changing global environment offers African countries an opportunity and a challenge to expand exports as an essential element in raising resources to finance development. However, much remains to be done to improve the competitiveness of African products in the international market and also with regard to the access to international markets for African products. The ECA Joint Conference of Ministers of Finance and Ministers Responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning, held at Addis Ababa from 6 to 8 May 1999, called for the establishment of a special international fund to permit the restructuring of enterprises to enhance value added and competitiveness, so as to cope with globalization.

E. Improving financial resource flows

40. In spite of the general decline in the level of ODA to Africa, some donor countries have increased development assistance to Africa. For example, the United Kingdom increased its ODA budget in 1999 by almost one third, while the United States increased its assistance to Africa by 4.5 per cent in 1999 and proposed a further increase of 10 per cent for 2000. According to the Swedish Government bill for fiscal year 1999, ODA will increase from 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) in 1998 to 0.73 per cent in 2001. Norway stepped up its ODA budget in 1998 to 0.91 per cent of GNP. The goal of Norway is to re-establish its ODA level to the previous level of 1 per cent and to increase its bilateral assistance to Africa from 46.2 per cent of its aid budget in 1998 to 50 per cent. Denmark has exceeded the target of ODA to developing countries and is contributing 1 per cent of GNP. Over 40 per cent goes to Africa.

41. The level of international expert technical assistance in official development assistance continues to be rather high, a concern noted in the Secretary-General's report. In an effort to redesign technical assistance to close the technical capacity gap between industrial and developing countries by accelerating the transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise, emphasis is placed on national execution of projects, pioneered by UNDP. UNDP, in cooperation with

the Federation of African Consultants, is involved in designing a sound framework to tackle this issue. The United Nations advocacy role is critical to the long-term solution of these issues.

42. The Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs[2] in a recent report entitled "Finding solutions to the debt problems of developing countries"[3] has made a number of proposals for an enhanced initiative on debt relief for highly indebted poor countries. The proposals include (a) extending the list of poor indebted countries eligible for debt relief; (b) shortening the length of the debt relief process from six to three years; (c) while sustainable levels of debt should be repaid, relaxation of the definition of what is sustainable so as to ensure that the levels set are realistic; (d) cancellation of all ODA debts of heavily indebted poor countries, while reducing other official bilateral debts by a minimum of 80 per cent, with full cancellation for post-conflict countries, countries affected by serious natural disasters and countries with very low social and human indicators; (e) meeting the cost of relief from partial sales of gold held by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a fresh allocation of special drawing rights, and additional bilateral contributions to multilateral trust funds for debt relief; and (f) beyond debt relief, with new concessional resource transfers to poor countries to achieve sustainable growth. Debt relief, therefore, should not be given at the expense of ODA. In addition, the report notes that 11 highly indebted poor countries in sub-Saharan Africa[4] have been identified as having exceptional needs for post-conflict economic rehabilitation assistance. For these countries, measures beyond the framework of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative may be required, including new approaches for providing early assistance and lending into or providing assistance under arrears.

43. In response to the growing concern about the limitations of the Debt Initiative to effectively deal with the debt burden of highly indebted poorest countries, the majority of which are in Africa, the World Bank and IMF undertook a comprehensive review of the Initiative in February 1999 with a view to possible improvements thereto. Since the review, the World Bank has established a review consultation Web page, and consultative meetings have been held in Germany, Honduras, Mozambique, Norway, Togo, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, which brought together dozens of organizations and more than 500 participants.

44. In its 1998 Trade and Development Report, UNCTAD proposed the establishment of a body composed of high-level personalities and experts in finance and development, appointed jointly by creditors and debtors, to undertake an independent assessment of the debt sustainability of African countries, with an undertaking by creditors to write off debt considered unpayable. The ECA Joint Conference of Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Economic and Social Development and Planning, held in May 1999 on the theme "The challenges of financing development in Africa", adopted a joint ministerial statement that articulated Africa's views on a variety of international financial issues. The Ministers urged the industrialized countries, in particular the group of seven major industrialized countries, to take the lead in agreeing to complete cancellation of debts arising from bilateral aid for the poorest countries and reduction of all other bilateral debts of the poorest countries by at least 90 per cent, emphasized the need to foster a new donor-beneficiary relationship in which multi-donor programmes would focus on an Africa-driven agenda, and stressed the importance of adequate representation of Africa and its views in all international intergovernmental bodies that might be set up to consider reforms of the international financial architecture.

45. UNDP/Africa has also prepared a policy paper which contributes to the formulation of a UNDP institutional position on debt abatement with respect to the Debt Initiative, and explores the capacity-building implications of such a position. The approach is to outline a framework for a debt-for-sustainable-human-development window which would enable eligible countries to secure additional debt relief as an incentive to accelerate poverty alleviation and sustainable human development programmes and make some headway towards achieving the major goals of the international community in these important activities.

46. In recent months, France and other G-7 countries have formulated proposals for debt relief for the heavily indebted poor countries, including improvements to the current Initiative, for discussion at the economic summit (Cologne, June 1999). The proposals have in common a recognition of the need for further debt reduction, forgiveness of bilateral debt for the poorest countries, and flexibility in the Debt Initiative. The Cologne meeting is expected to endorse some concrete actions for debt relief for the indebted poor countries that go beyond past initiatives.

47. There seems to be an emerging consensus on the need to lower the threshold and target values for debt indicators. A number of proposals, including proposals from major donor countries, have been made to this effect, for example, the Mauritius mandate by the British Government in September 1997; the Cologne debt initiative of the German Government of January 1999; and proposed actions for deeper and faster debt reduction by the President of the United States of America at a conference on a United States-

Africa partnership for the twenty-first century in March 1999. Other proposals have been made by Canada, France, Italy and Japan.

48. There have been a number of positive developments recently at the bilateral level in relation to debt relief for African countries. In 1998, the Government of Norway launched the Norwegian Debt Relief Strategy, which aims at reducing the debt burden of the poorest and heavily indebted countries and enabling them to embark on the next millennium with a debt situation that will not be an impediment to sustained economic and social development. In addition to increasing its contribution to the IMF operations in favour of the poorest countries by granting an additional loan of $300 million for the period from July 1999 to December 2000, the Government of Belgium has committed itself to cancelling the debt of the last 40 years for countries that are not eligible under the Debt Initiative. These countries will be selected for debt relief subject to criteria such as good governance, respect of human rights and the rule of law. Already 12 African countries, including Benin, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, the Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, have benefited from cancellation of their debt under bilateral arrangements.

49. In the context of the recommendations relating to attracting investment for stimulating growth and the importance of investing in infrastructure development, under a UNDP/national long-term perspective studies project, a forum to review the competitiveness of African economies was organized in Dakar in March 1999 in cooperation with the Government of Senegal, also involving UNCTAD, WTO, UNIDO, the African Development Bank, OAU, ECA and UNESCO. Its objective was to agree on steps to be taken to create a positive environment for investment and to enhance competitiveness. The review helped to take stock of the openness to trade, rationalized tax structures, adequate infrastructure, transparency and accountability as well as protection of property rights. That forum and other activities on investment and growth under way in the context of the Special Initiative trade cluster can provide a good basis for the Secretary-General's joint action with the Secretary-General of OAU to promote large-scale long-term investment, including multi-country infrastructure projects and exploitation of shared natural resources. UNIDO is also involved in promoting investment in Africa, convening investment promotion conferences for Guinea and Uganda and for the southern Africa region in 1998 and 1999. Additional activities are to be held in Burkina Faso and Madagascar.

50. In the context of attracting investment, the Secretary-General recommended the need to draw the attention of investors to progress and new opportunities in Africa. In this regard, the Internet is an effective mechanism for rapidly disseminated information to aid investment decisions. To promote privatization in Africa, the World Bank and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) created a specialized window within IPAnet, MIGA's Internet-based marketplace for investment opportunities, to launch Privatization Link, profiling investment opportunities arising from privatization. MIGA also supported private investment by issuing guarantees totalling $126 million covering projects in Angola, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Mozambique and Uganda, which facilitated $2.3 billion in foreign direct investment.

F. Support for regional cooperation and integration

51. United Nations organizations continue to support activities aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and integration. The Southern African Development Community (SADC), in cooperation with UNIDO, organized in 1998 at Windhoek a workshop with a view to defining or formulating industrial policy and strategies for SADC. The workshop was attended by approximately 40 high-level officials from the public and private sectors.

52. Significant support has been provided by UNIDO for the leather sector in Eastern Africa through a regional project involving nine countries, namely, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The programme's strategy is centred on the establishment of the Eastern and Southern Africa Leather Industries Association, which promotes skill development and technology upgrading across the entire range of operations in the leather cycle and provides direct support to business in the field of quality enhancement and pollution control, and facilitates partnerships with foreign firms. Projects implemented so far under this programme totalled $27 million.

53. UNESCO is working towards promoting regional and subregional cooperation in the area of telematics and the information society through a Regional Informatics Network for Africa which links focal points in 42 Member States concerned with promoting the use of information and communication technologies in development. Activities include coordination meetings and electronic discussions on the planning of cooperative activities and sharing of experience, support for subregional training courses, pilot projects on the application of telematics for development in sectors of public concern, and promotion of the African

content of the World Wide Web for educational, scientific, social and cultural development.

54. South-South cooperation has enormous potential for tapping the vast resources and experiences available in the developing world as well as forging subregional and regional cooperation. UNIDO has utilized the framework of the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development as a vehicle for promoting South-South and triangular cooperation. UNIDO, in collaboration with Japan and UNCTAD, plans to implement a project to establish an Asia-Africa Investment and Technology Promotion Centre at Kuala Lumpur, which aims to facilitate partnership between Asian and African entrepreneurs and attract investment flows between the two regions. Similarly, ITC is currently implementing a South-South trade development and cooperation programme which is designed to strengthen the ties between the business sectors in Africa and other regions. UNCTAD organized an Asia-Africa Business Networking Forum at Kuala Lumpur in March 1999, with the participation of some 100 entrepreneurs from 10 African and 13 Asian countries, which led to over 15 cooperation and marketing agreements. Japan, in collaboration with UNDP, will also support the launching of the Asia-Africa Business Forum, where business people from the two regions will meet late in 1999 to discuss trade and investment promotion between Asia and Africa.

55. ECA provides a range of technical support, through its regional advisory services and subregional development centres, for institutional strengthening of the various regional economic communities in Africa. It has for instance assisted in the restructuring of the secretariats of the Economic Community of West African States and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). ECA has also undertaken feasibility studies on self-financing mechanisms for COMESA, which, in due course, will be extended to SADC. At the request of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), ECA is assisting in relaunching regional cooperation and integration in that subregion. In pursuance of that effort, ECA has produced several major studies on the following subjects: strategic framework on regional integration and subregional cooperation; rethinking development in Central Africa in the twenty-first century; making regional integration the engine for sustained growth and sustainable development at the national level; programme for relaunching regional integration in the Central African subregion; and renewing ECCAS: 1999–2001.

56. Significant progress in the area of regional cooperation and integration requires a more genuine supportive attitude on the part of donors and international trading partners, particularly with regard to the development of common standards and equipment among neighbouring countries. **African countries, with the support of their development partners, should examine ways in which support for regional and subregional integration can be used to promote economic discipline and sound macroeconomic policies, and facilitate the establishment of solid institutional confidence-building links between neighbouring countries.**

IV. Priority areas under the current initiatives on Africa and possible priorities in partnership

57. The United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/151 of 18 December 1991, sets priority areas with the goal of promoting Africa's economic recovery and development. African countries agreed to implement economic reforms; intensify the democratization process; strengthen regional cooperation and integration; develop human resources, in particular science and technology; integrate population concerns into development planning; improve agricultural and rural development to achieve food security; protect the environment and promote sustainable development; promote investment and increase the role of civil society in national decision-making while intensifying South-South cooperation. Development partners committed themselves to supporting the implementation of these priorities and to facilitate a solution of the debt problem; increase resources flows; increase market access; support economic diversification; and encourage foreign direct investment in Africa while supporting regional integration.

58. Since the adoption of the New Agenda by the General Assembly, many intergovernmental initiatives have been launched in efforts to tackle the development challenges facing the continent. The most prominent of the initiatives defined by African countries themselves are the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and the Cairo Agenda for Action: Relaunching Africa's Economic and Social Development.

59. Adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU on 28 June 1995, the Cairo Agenda for Action was formulated against the backdrop of the economic crisis facing the majority of African countries and can serve as a good starting point for prioritization (see para. 70 below).

60. Among the initiatives for African development there are bilateral and multilateral ones, initiatives taken for the coordination of United Nations system-wide activities and initiatives taken by individual donor countries. They include the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative, the implementing arm of the New Agenda; several initiatives in the context of the United Nations, its agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, such as coordination initiatives at the regional level which are part of thematic or sectoral programmes on Africa launched by a number of organizations. Significant examples are (a) the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) led by ECA and including UNESCO, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), UNDP, FAO, UNIDO, the World Bank and the International Research Center of Canada; (b) the United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa, involving ECA, UNCTAD, ILO, UNDP, the World Bank, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and ITU; (c) the Alliance for Africa's Industrialization led by UNIDO and supported by ECA, UNDP, and the African Development Bank; and (d) UNESCO support for national news agencies and the Pan-African News Agency.

61. Donor initiatives include the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, the United States Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa, the Swedish Partnership with Africa, and the United Kingdom Initiative on Eliminating World Poverty.

62. The United Nations System-wide Special Initiative, launched in March 1996, aims to achieve greater impact at the country level, focusing on a number of selected areas, within the priorities identified in the New Agenda and the Cairo Agenda, which would benefit most from greater collaboration among organizations of the United Nations system. The focus areas for joint action included water for household use and food production; food security with emphasis on combating desertification and land degradation; governance, including peace-building; strengthening civil society and harnessing information technology for development; social and human development with emphasis on education and health; and resource mobilization focusing on debt relief, effective aid coordination, market access and domestic savings. Diversification of Africa's economies and regional cooperation and integration were added later.

63. Organized with the United Nations and the Global Coalition for Africa, the Tokyo Conference hosted by Japan in October 1993 identified the development of the private sector; regional cooperation and integration; emergency relief and development; international cooperation with emphasis on increased development assistance; international advocacy for debt relief; market access; and diversification of Africa's commodities as the key priorities for African development. The Tokyo Agenda for Action, adopted by the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development, held in October 1998, also established a number of priorities based on widespread consultation among African and Asian Governments and the private sector, donor countries and international and regional organizations in a series of preparatory activities prior to the Conference. The priority areas include social development and poverty reduction, with the focus on education and health; economic development and the promotion of the private sector, with the focus on trade, investment and infrastructure; and good governance, conflict prevention and post-conflict development.

64. The United States Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa, launched in June 1997, contains a number of priorities that were selected to reinforce Africa's economic recovery. Its main elements are increased market access; the promotion of private investment; forgiveness of bilateral debt with support for maximum relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative; food security through market liberalization, export development and agri-business development; the modernization of airports; energy development; and support for regional integration through promoting investment policy harmonization, regional business linkages, financial sector development and privatization.

65. Sweden's Partnership with Africa initiative, adopted by its Parliament in 1998, also seeks to help African countries to realize their untapped growth potential and become more closely integrated into the global economy. The priorities were established in consultation with a number of African Governments and civil society organizations. The initiative covers trade development; debt relief; domestic resource mobilization, in particular strengthening of the financial sector; support for economic reforms; strengthening civil society organizations; and good governance, human rights and conflict prevention.

66. While not specifically for Africa, the United Kingdom's Initiative on Eliminating World Poverty will primarily benefit the world's poorest region. Its goal is to contribute to the elimination of poverty by seeking to implement international development targets on the basis of United Nations resolutions and major conferences. It aims to achieve this goal by implementing a series of programmes and projects around the following priorities: trade development, increased ODA, debt relief, promotion of investment, improved governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law and conflict prevention.

67. A successor agreement to the Lomé Convention is currently being negotiated. The framework for negotiations includes priorities such as more effective use of ODA; diversification of production and exports; human resource development, including science and technology development; private sector development and investment; regional integration; good governance, democracy and human rights; and the involvement of civil society in decision-making.

68. While initially focused solely on providing quick-disbursing funds to fill the gaps in the national budgets of low-income, debt-distressed countries undertaking economic reforms, the Special Programme for Africa launched by the World Bank in 1988 has shifted its focus on economic growth. Beginning with the third cycle (1994–1996), the Programme has been moving towards sector investment programmes in areas such as education, health, infrastructure and agriculture, with increased focus on poverty reduction.

69. The initiatives described above cover a wide range of priorities that could be considered by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999 as the basis for discussion between African countries and their development partners aimed at identifying and ranking priorities in partnership, in compliance with the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 53/92.

70. While the priorities in the various initiatives differ in specificity, they can be generally grouped under the broader priorities established by Africans themselves in the Cairo Agenda, namely, democracy, governance, peace, security, stability and sustainable development; food security; capacity-building and human resources development; structural transformation of African economies; effective mobilization and efficient utilization of resources; and regional cooperation and integration.

71. **While there is agreement on the broader priorities there are differences in emphasis placed on specific priorities, both at the level of African countries and at the level of bilateral donors. The Economic and Social Council may wish to consider how the array of priorities for African development, defined in different contexts, can be ranked as requested by the General Assembly to help in the process of harmonization of the various initiatives.**

72. While it is clear that African development is the primary responsibility of the African countries themselves, as demonstrated by the many initiatives outlined above, development partners are committed to supporting the efforts of the region in the spirit of shared responsibility and partnership. In order to ensure that goals are met and progress achieved, it is important to consider measurable targets in priority areas, as requested by the General Assembly.

73. At the more general level, the United Nations has adopted a target of 0.7 per cent of the GNP of developed countries for official development assistance. A target of 0.15 per cent of GNP was similarly established for ODA to the least developed countries, 33 of which (of a total of 48) are in Africa. The United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, established a target growth rate of 6 per cent per annum for African countries and a minimum of $30 billion in net ODA by donor countries in 1992, which would increase at an annual average of 4 per cent thereafter.

74. Recent United Nations global conferences, including the World Conference on Education for All (1990), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the World Summit for Social Development (1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), have also established landmark targets in a number of areas.

75. Many of the targets agreed upon relate to the social sector, in particular to poverty eradication, education and health, including reproductive health. While many of these targets are not specific to Africa, meeting them is critical in establishing and reinforcing the basic foundation for development. The Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (Paris, 1990) set separate targets for the development of least developed countries. **In the light of the recommendation made by the General Assembly and in view of the more general targets also applicable to Africa which have been highlighted above, the Economic and Social Council may wish to consider the linkages between targets, the establishment of specific new targets and their utility in the context of prioritizing, monitoring and evaluating the progress of initiatives and the development of Africa.**

V. Coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on Africa

76. The complexity and variety of economic and social situations prevailing in the African countries, and the diversity of their peace and security conditions (see A/52/871–S/1998/318), have been met by a variety of responses from the United Nations system in areas such as

peacemaking and peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. Africa continues to witness a significant expansion in the operations of the United Nations system.

A. Coordination of United Nations system initiatives

1. At the global and regional level

77. The Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, and the United Nations system's response to that report through the Administrative Committee on Coordination, should be regarded as an integral part of the effort to strengthen inter-agency coordination in support of African development. The Deputy Secretary-General has been entrusted with the follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General contained in the report.

78. In considering the system's response to the Secretary-General's report, the executive heads of the United Nations system, meeting in the Administrative Committee on Coordination in the autumn of 1998, fully shared the emphasis placed by the Secretary-General on the need for a comprehensive and holistic approach by the international community and the United Nations system in addressing the multifaceted problems confronting Africa. The Secretary-General emphasized the importance of linkages between security and sustainable development, on the one hand, and of interrelationships between the actions of Governments, the United Nations system and civil society actors on the other. The Committee endorsed the call in the Secretary-General's report for the United Nations system, the international community and the African countries to frame their actions within a broad common agenda. In the same context, the Secretary-General informed the Committee of the outcome of a recent meeting he had convened with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Development Assistance Committee countries and of the response of African heads of State or Government, as expressed, for example, at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, both affirming commitment and support for the overall approaches set out in the report.

79. As part of the common effort to mobilize political will and to achieve convergence in the system's actions in support of African development, the executive heads agreed to bring the Secretary-General's report to the attention of the various governing bodies of the system. To the same ends, the members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination stressed the importance of the full involvement of ECA and close interaction with OAU. They agreed that strategic and policy analysis relevant to the peace-building and development objectives set out in the report would be more systematically shared among them, and directed all the Committee's subsidiary bodies and other relevant inter-agency mechanisms to give special attention to ways of pursuing the objectives set in the report. Committee members also committed themselves to strengthening inter-agency consultations with a view to facilitating the harmonization of Africa-related initiatives, including in connection with the preparation of and follow-up to international and bilateral donor initiatives relating to Africa undertaken in collaboration with the organizations of the system.

80. At the intergovernmental level, the arrangements put in place for the implementation and the coordinated follow-up of initiatives on Africa are mainly those adopted for the coordination of the implementation of the New Agenda. Before its adoption in December 1991, the Committee for Programme and Coordination had introduced, in the medium-term plan for the period 1992–1997, a new programme entitled "Africa: critical economic situation, recovery and development" (programme 45), requesting the Secretary-General to prepare a system-wide plan of action for African economic recovery and development, in collaboration with the executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system as the basis for system-wide coordination. When the New Agenda was adopted, all organizations were requested to establish, in their respective areas, specific programmes consistent with the orientations of the Agenda, devoting adequate resources to their implementation.

81. In response to those two requests, the Secretary-General elaborated in 1992 a system-wide plan of action, which was adopted by the Committee for Programme and Coordination and subsequently revised in 1994, including specific administrative arrangements to enhance coordination and advocacy work on Africa.[5] In 1997 the Committee replaced the Plan of Action with the System-wide Special Initiative.

82. The follow-up, monitoring and evaluation machinery set up at the intergovernmental level for the implementation of the New Agenda has since made an important contribution to enhancing the coordination of the activities of the United Nations system on Africa, as in the case of the review by the Committee for Programme and Coordination of system-wide activities on Africa and the mid-term review of the New Agenda conducted in 1996 by the General Assembly. The

Committee has carried out an in-depth evaluation of programme 45 of the medium-term plan for the period 1992–1997, and set up a new programme (programme 6 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001) linking the Special Initiative and the New Agenda.

83. Sharpening the role of the Special Initiative as an instrument to advance the New Agenda, and strengthening the linkages between the two, have been a constant concern of the Administrative Committee on Coordination since the launch of the Initiative. The Committee has also endeavoured to promote closer linkage between the Special Initiative and other development cooperation undertakings, such as the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, the Alliance for Africa's Industrialization and ongoing and new programmes in the health sector as well as programmes for skills improvement and the informal sector. Through its subsidiary machinery the Committee has also worked to promote closer interactions between the Special Initiative and inter-agency activities related to the coordinated follow-up to global conferences.

84. In the same context the Administrative Committee on Coordination has encouraged and supported efforts at the country level by the resident coordinators and the United Nations country teams as well as representatives of the Bretton Woods institutions, to intensify their collaboration within the framework of the Special Initiative. The development of benchmarks designed to measure progress at the country level produced intensive inter-agency work, which was more advanced in the areas of education and governance than in other areas such as trade access, debt, and investment and employment promotion, although progress in this respect is also being registered.

85. In general the Special Initiative has already recorded good progress at the country level, particularly in clusters where lead agencies have a major role. This is the case in education, with UNESCO, the World Bank, UNICEF and UNDP; health with WHO and the World Bank; population and gender with the United Nations Population Fund; harnessing information for development with ECA; governance with UNDP and ECA, which have initiated an annual Africa Governance Forum series to exchange information and experience among Governments and civil society organizations; trade with UNCTAD, which, in collaboration with WTO and ITC, has developed an integrated framework for trade-related technical assistance for least developed and other countries; UNCTAD is also cooperating with UNDP in assisting the African countries in trade promotion and negotiations. Similarly, ILO, in cooperation with ECA, has played an important role in poverty reduction through the promotion of the informal sector and employment generation. As an integrated part of the Africa Governance Forum process, the joint UNDP/Department of Economic and Social Affairs comprehensive databases and analysis of governance activities are expected to enhance the in-country capacity for coordination and lead to sustainability.

86. In April 1998, at the first annual meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning, ECA was requested to prepare a report on collaboration and coordination among the organizations of the United Nations system at the regional and subregional levels, to be submitted to the Conference at its 1999 session. Subsequently, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1998/46, endorsed the recommendation of the Secretary-General to convene, on an annual basis, regional coordination meetings of the United Nations agencies engaged in regional and intercountry activities.

87. The first annual regional coordination meeting of the United Nations system in Africa convened pursuant to the Council's resolution was held at Nairobi in March 1999, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General. Addressing the effectiveness of existing coordination mechanisms, that meeting agreed that the creation of new structures of coordination at the country level should be avoided and that existing coordination arrangements should be streamlined and strengthened. It was also agreed that the Special Initiative could provisionally constitute an appropriate mechanism for the coordination of the United Nations system's work in Africa and that additional sub-themes or clusters could be included for that purpose in the programme.[6]

2. At the country level

88. The activities of the United Nations system are coordinated at the country level in various ways, according to the diversity of prevailing circumstances. Basic coordination mechanisms are established within the resident coordinator system, with the aim of harmonizing programmes and interfacing with the Government for a constructive policy dialogue. In all cases, the ultimate responsibility for coordination lies with the Government.

89. A few of those mechanisms will be highlighted here: strategic and programmatic frameworks such as the country strategy note, the common country assessment, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and thematic groups.

90. The country strategy note, established by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/199, has been adopted as a coordinating framework in 16 African countries[7] out of 33 countries worldwide (48.5 per cent of the total for Africa).[8] In several cases,[9] the country strategy note has substantially contributed to a policy dialogue with the Government, providing a coherent frame of reference for programming. In the last four years, country strategy notes have increasingly focused on the outcome of global conferences and the national commitments to implement them.

91. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework was introduced only in 1998 in a limited number of countries as part of the Secretary-General's reform proposals of 14 July 1997, and benefited from the policy guidance of the General Assembly (see resolution 53/192). Ten African countries participated in the pilot phase[10] and in eight of them the process of formulation has been completed.[11] Where the country strategy note was available, the UNDAF was harmonized with it, complementing that process and intensifying the coordinated and integrated response of the United Nations system to national priorities. In one country (Mali), an attempt was made to harmonize the formulation of the UNDAF with the preparation of the country assistance strategy of the World Bank. The initial stage of the pilot does not allow any assessment of its impact on coordination, especially since the UNDAF, during its pilot experience, was often prepared after country cooperation programmes were already formulated and approved. There are clear signals (e.g., in Morocco) that the UNDAF process is not only a planning tool but also a way to identify both the areas of convergence among funds, programmes and specialized agencies and possible gaps to be filled in order to maximize the impact of United Nations system activities in the host country.

92. The common country assessment, initially launched by the Joint Consultative Group on Policy in 1996, benefited from a renewed impulse since the new guidelines adopted by the United Nations Development Group in 1999, endorsed by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions, stressed its role as a first step for the formulation of an UNDAF. The common country assessment is conceived as a fundamental input to the formulation of future UNDAFs and a useful contribution to the formulation or revision of country strategy notes. While the common country assessments undertaken within the UNDAF pilot are limited in number,[12] it is expected that the assessment will become a much stronger coordination instrument in all countries of the region.

93. Humanitarian assistance is an important component of the support provided by the United Nations system in several African countries. Its coordination has required, in nine African countries, the adoption of a specialized mechanism, the consolidated appeals process.[13] Although none of those countries has formulated an UNDAF, it is expected that the harmonization of the UNDAF and common country assessment processes with the consolidated appeals process will be further explored and analysed, in order to complement emergency relief with recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, as well as promotion of sustainable development.

94. Another coordination tool for countries affected by special circumstances is the strategic framework. The Administrative Committee on Coordination adopted the generic guidelines for a strategic framework as a response to, and recovery from, crisis in exceptional cases, on the basis of the first experience attempted for Afghanistan. The framework has the potential to be a useful tool in Africa.

95. All the above-mentioned strategic and programming frameworks are potentially very powerful instruments for enhancing the coordination of United Nations system support to the African region, but their application to a limited, even if significant, number of countries indicates that much more needs to be done. It is expected that the generalized application of the common country assessment to most countries of the region will soon enhance collaboration among various partners, in the delicate phase of the identification of strategic issues. A key feature of the common country assessment is that it potentially involves not only the United Nations system but also other donors and a variety of national interlocutors.

96. Whether or not these strategic programming tools have been implemented in each country of the region, the primary coordinating role for the operational activities for development of the United Nations system continues to be played by the resident coordinator system, which works through the field-level committee,[14] with the participation of representatives of all organizations of the United Nations system with country offices. In most cases, the resident coordinator system also covers the coordination of humanitarian assistance and its harmonization with development cooperation activities of the United Nations system.

97. In those cases where peacekeeping dimensions are particularly relevant, the coordination function is often played by a special representative of the Secretary-General in the country or in the subregion, or a special envoy of the Secretary-General. Similarly, where humanitarian assistance is crucial, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs may appoint a humanitarian coordinator. Often the

special representatives of the Secretary-General are also appointed as humanitarian coordinators, while in other cases the functions of resident coordinator and humanitarian coordinator are carried out by the same person. In some cases the resident coordinator serves as the deputy special representative of the Secretary-General. This variety of arrangements is indicative of the complexity of coordination in countries where different problems arise concerning the relations among peace and security, humanitarian assistance, post-emergency or post-conflict situations and development.

98. Thematic groups, which usually report to the field-level committee, are crucial to enhancing system-wide coordination and policy dialogue with the Government, and as regular consultation mechanisms and interaction for the integrated follow-up to global conferences. They have been established in all those African countries which have regular development cooperation activities. They function according to the lead agency principle, reflecting the mandate of each organization. Other multilateral and regional institutions and bilateral donors often take part in these thematic groups. The participation of national authorities is often encouraged, and in many cases the Government has a lead role in chairing the groups. Civil society and non-governmental organizations are increasingly involved as important partners.

99. Thematic groups played an important role in the formulation of country strategy notes. They had an even more durable and significant impact where they were established as a follow-up to global conferences, although their effectiveness is uneven.[15] They are crucial in the formulation of the UNDAF. A preliminary review of the annual reports of resident coordinators for 1998 shows that the linkage between thematic groups, follow-up to global conferences and the formulation and monitoring of an UNDAF may represent an effective way of enhancing coordination, not only within the system, but also with other stakeholders.[16]

100. In several African countries, the thematic groups on HIV/AIDS represent one of the most successful examples of what this tool can do, involving major donors and civil society, often resulting in national plans or coordinating frameworks, and facilitating resource mobilization to support the implementation of specific programmes. Another example is the thematic groups established within the resident coordinator system as part of the ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, which was launched by the Administrative Committee on Coordination in 1997 with the aim of promoting specific initiatives for the follow-up to the World Food Summit. The Network is managed by FAO and IFAD, in close cooperation with the World Food Programme, and aims, *inter alia*, at fostering complementarities and synergies between United Nations organizations and other stakeholders and promoting information on best practices, also by making extensive use of information technology.

101. Other coordinating mechanisms extensively used in African countries are round tables, consultative group meetings and sectoral consultations, which play a special role in consultation with donors and resource mobilization for development assistance financing. Recently, the President of the World Bank proposed the formulation of a comprehensive development framework, with the aim of providing a long-term, holistic and strategic approach to the coordination of external efforts, integrating efforts of the United Nations system with the World Bank under the leadership of the Government. It is expected that linkages between the comprehensive development framework and UNDAF will be further enhanced to harmonize the two tools and make them complementary.

102. In spite of the overall progress in coordination efforts at the country level, several problems limit their effectiveness. First, the uneven decentralization of authority among organizations of the United Nations system generates imbalanced participation of each entity in the various mechanisms. Second, because of resource constraints, some organizations, though represented in the country, are unable to participate effectively in the coordination mechanisms. Third, Government capacity is at times limited in terms of human and financial resources.

103. **Taking note of the variety of country-specific situations and needs in the African region, which is also reflected in the variety of coordination mechanisms adopted by the United Nations system and host countries to ensure a harmonized and integrated response to national priorities, the Economic and Social Council may wish to request the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as other multilateral and regional organizations and bilateral donors, to collaborate with the Government of each African country, and among themselves, in order to ensure the consistency of the various coordination mechanisms, favouring synergy, containing duplication, avoiding contradictions and simplifying, as appropriate, the modalities and procedures required by the functioning of these mechanisms.**

B. Harmonization of non-United Nations initiatives on Africa

104. As mentioned in section III of this report, a number of bilateral initiatives on Africa have emerged in recent years, including the Swedish Partnership with Africa, the United States Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa, the Tokyo Agenda for Action,[17] the United Kingdom initiative on poverty eradication and the initiative of the Republic of Korea on Asia-Africa cooperation in export promotion.[18] While these initiatives indicate that the United Nations goal of putting Africa's development at the top of the global agenda is receiving active support from the international community, they need to be harmonized with each other and with those undertaken by the United Nations system for maximum benefit to the recipient countries of Africa.

105. In terms of operations, the activities of the United Nations system represent a small proportion of the total flows of development cooperation with African countries, which include an important component from other multilateral institutions and bilateral donors. United Nations system coordination, to be truly effective, must be linked with the overall coordination of development cooperation with every specific African country.

106. Coordination of external assistance is a challenging task, which is the responsibility of the Government of the host country. There are several examples in Africa where the United Nations supports national efforts of the Government to coordinate external assistance. While consultation between the United Nations system and bilateral donors is generalized in all countries of the regions, there are cases where this consultation process is supported by special institutional arrangements, that is, donor contact groups, beyond the consultative group and round-table mechanisms, where the Government may request the United Nations system, or the resident coordinator, to support national efforts in this area.

107. Analysis of the bilateral initiatives discussed earlier in this report shows that most of the initiatives share common objectives and goals. Selected thematic consultations are frequently promoted in individual countries with a view to encouraging donor agencies to converge efforts in support of national initiatives. Such consultations also deal with mobilization of the resources required to implement activities in common areas or subregions. The consultation between the United Nations system and other donors could be intensified, under the leadership of the Government of the host country. A potential opportunity to expand such a dialogue could be the expanded implementation of the common country assessment exercises as an instrument not only for analysis but also for policy dialogue.

108. **In an effort to harmonize these initiatives, the United Nations can organize selected thematic consultations to be attended by representatives of donor countries and the host country to discuss common priorities at the policy and operational levels with a view to encouraging donor agencies to streamline and rationalize their respective development activities and bring them closer to those of the United Nations system. Such consultations could also deal with the mobilization of the resources required to implement activities in the common priority areas.**

Notes

[1] The following organizations and donor countries responded to the questionnaire:

Organizations of the United Nations system: UNIDO, UNESCO, UNEP, UNCTAD, UNHCR, UNDP, UNFPA, FAO, WFP, WHO, UPU, IMF, World Bank, ECA, ITC, IFAD, IMO, ICAO, ILO, ITU.

Donor developed countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United States of America, Denmark, Ireland.

Donor developing countries: China, India.

[2] The membership of the Committee comprises: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Economic Commission for Europe, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations University, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Institute for Training and Research and United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

[3] ECESA/99/22. This report can be found on the Internet at www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecesa/eces99-2.htm.

[4] Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia and the Sudan.

[5] These administrative arrangements include the creation, within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, of the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries with the mandate to support and expand the advocacy role for Africa of the Secretary-General, assist

in global coordination concerning African development and related issues throughout the United Nations system, and provide substantive support to the intergovernmental machinery in its deliberations on Africa; and the establishment of the Panel of High-level Personalities on African Development with the mandate to address, *inter alia*, coordination issues.

[6] The ACC Steering Committee on the Special Initiative at its 8th meeting, held in New York in May 1999, endorsed the agreement reached at the first annual regional coordination meeting.

[7] Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, the Comoros, Eritrea, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, the Sudan and Zambia.

[8] As compared with other regions, the frequency with which African countries have adopted this instrument is significant. In addition, four other countries (Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Namibia and the Niger) have produced final drafts. Nevertheless, this shows that only a minority of African countries have adopted the country strategy note as an instrument of coordination.

[9] In all cases, the preparation of the country strategy note has enhanced information exchange among United Nations organizations, has increased their coordination and has been a team-building process. The leadership of the Government in the preparation of the country strategy note and the participation of national authorities have been effective in several countries. Typical examples where this process was particularly productive are, *inter alia*, the cases of Morocco, Senegal and Zambia. However, in other countries their involvement, especially at the level of line authorities, has been inadequate. An assessment of the country strategy note process was undertaken at the 1998 triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development (see A/53/226/Add.1).

[10] Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

[11] This is the case of Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Senegal, and Zimbabwe.

[12] Only five countries (Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe) of the pilot group have already completed a common country assessment. However, in many other African countries there are several other analytical instruments already available, such as human development reports promoted by UNDP, poverty assessments promoted by the World Bank, social situation assessments of various kinds promoted by UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA, agricultural assessments launched by FAO or IFAD and food security studies conducted by WFP, which represent a good foundation for the common country assessment.

[13] This is the case in Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Somalia, the Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

[14] See General Assembly resolution 47/199, para. 40 and resolution 50/120, para. 41.

[15] An example of best practice is that of Mauritania, where a thematic group on rural development and food security was established in 1998, under the leadership of FAO, with the participation of representatives of WFP and UNDP and, from the national side, the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Economy, the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, the Food Security Commission, the Commission for Human Rights and Poverty Eradication, the Development for Women Affairs and several non-governmental organizations. The group prepared a follow-up report on the World Food Summit, which contains also a vulnerability assessment and mapping in terms of food security.

[16] A good example is the case of Ghana, where a working group on gender was formed, within the framework of UNDAF, drawing on gender focal points of all organizations of the United Nations system, including Bretton Woods institutions.

[17] The Government of Japan initiated the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, which culminated, in October 1998, in the adoption of the Tokyo Agenda for Action. The Agenda encompasses social development and poverty reduction with focus on education and health, economic development and promotion of the private sector, with focus on trade, investment and infrastructure, and good governance, conflict prevention and post-conflict development.

[18] The initiative is the result of the Forum on Asia-Africa Cooperation in Export Promotion held at Seoul in December 1998.